International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)

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International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War is a non-partisan federation of national medical organizations in 64 countries, representing tens of thousands of doctors, medical students, other health workers, and concerned citizens who share the common goal of creating a more peaceful and secure world freed from the threat of nuclear annihilation and armed violence. IPPNW was founded in 1980 by physicians from the U.S. and the former Soviet Union who shared a common commitment to the prevention of nuclear war between their two countries. Citing the first principal of the medical profession — that doctors have an obligation to prevent what they cannot treat — a global federation of physician experts came together to explain the medical and scientific facts about nuclear war to policy makers and to the public, and to advocate for the elimination of nuclear weapons. For their work, IPPNW received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. IPPNW has remained a leader in the global movement for a world without nuclear weapons, launching the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in 2007, winner of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize “for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.”

IPPNW is committed to addressing the causes of armed violence from a public health perspective. We recognize that the catastrophic health and environmental consequences of a nuclear war are at the extreme end of a continuum of armed violence that undermines health and security. The 1990s global campaign to ban landmines marked IPPNW’s first major entry into the non-nuclear arena. We launched Aiming for Prevention in 2001, to address armed violence prevention. Aiming for Prevention has been driven by IPPNW affiliates from the global South—primarily Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia—who live and work in areas where armed violence is a constant threat and consumes significant portions of health care budgets.

IPPNW’s Aiming for Prevention campaign responds to the call to action by WHO that the medical community must bring a public health perspective to the issue of violence in order to identify risk factors, design effective interventions, and use the data we gather to influence violence prevention policies. The programs and activities of IPPNW are primarily in the areas of research, education, and policy development and design. IPPNW’s Central Office is located in Malden, Massachusetts.

VPA focal person

Maria Valenti
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Maria has served since 2004 as the half-time director of IPPNW's Aiming for Prevention armed violence prevention program. She provides a wide range of support to IPPNW affiliates worldwide who are working on this issue including helping to develop, implement and monitor research, education and advocacy programs. She writes, publishes and presents on public health approaches to armed violence and on related policy issues. She assists affiliates in such areas as communications, conferences, campaign materials, research, publishing, fundraising, and other avenues to support their local to international efforts. She represents IPPNW at forums such as the United Nations, and in international coalitions and networks including the World Health Organization's Violence Prevention Alliance. She also continues to work in the field of environmental health, which intersects with the public health issue of violence. She previously served in leadership positions for 18 years with Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility, a founding chapter of IPPNW's US affiliate, PSR.